

ME and My Shadow

In February each year, thousands of New Hampshire students participate in a job shadowing experience. Job shadowing gives students the chance to actually examine what people do in various jobs. The National Groundhog Job Shadow initiative provides an opportunity for connecting the subjects you study in school with the reality of the workplace. With a little bit of preparation, the job shadow experience can be made even more valuable. Take a look at the following ways to connect your classroom work to your career exploration. You will find that job shadowing will open your eyes to new possibilities.

Step #1. Take some time to explore your interests. What are your strongest subjects in school? Talk to your guidance counselor or teachers. There are some excellent ways to match your interests and academic subjects. Many schools have computerized methods of determining your career interests. You will probably discover that you have one very strong area of interest.

Step #2. Select, with the help of parents, teachers, and guidance counselors, a career cluster. A career cluster is a group of careers that have common characteristics. You may find that you have interests in more than one career cluster. Having more than one area of interest is an advantage. You will find there will be more opportunities when the time comes to select your job shadow site.

Step #3. Select a job site. Your school may have a list of job sites that offer shadowing opportunities. Remember that many job sites offer a range of career possibilities. Sometimes shadowing many different careers will help you focus on selecting the job that really interests you.

Step #4. Research your job site. The Internet offers the opportunity for students to do some investigation. Do a search by company name. You will be surprised at the wealth of information available online. You may find that knowing about your job site will help you ask the right questions. It may even give you clues

about what to wear to your job shadowing site.

Step #5. Prepare questions. You will be assigned a worksite mentor. Don't be afraid to ask your mentor about his/her job. The best questions involve asking your mentor what they like or even dislike about the various aspects of their job. Ask what school subjects have really helped them to be successful in their career. Another important question involves how they trained for their career. Did they have to go to school beyond high school? Remember, mentors are experienced. They can tell you what you need to know to get started in a particular career.

Step #6. Have fun during your job shadow experience. Share your experience with friends. If it is valuable, please tell your mentor and the worksite host. A follow-up thank you letter is a nice way of expressing your sincere appreciation.

Your job shadow experience is completed. Now you have a chance to

sit back and thin the experience. You find that the job visit may confirm you are headed in right direction as have selected a great career. You can also find out that what you thought was a fantastic career is really not what you imagined. Both experiences are valuable. Seize the opportunity to get involved in other job shadowing events. If you want more information on job shadowing, check out www.jobshadow.org. The website of National Groundhog Job Shadow Day has a wealth of information and suggestions for your career exploration.



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Choosing a Career



- Are you a science/math computer type or do you love to paint modern art pieces?
- Are you a natural leader? An extrovert? A team player?
- Do you find bookstores irresistible?
- Which section of the bookstore?
- What academic subjects are you particularly good at and/or enjoy?
- What skills have you acquired from work, home or from hobbies?
- Have you lived through tragic, compelling, or intense experiences which give you a unique or rich knowledge about human life?

Cultivating self-awareness

Before making even tentative decisions about the rest of your life, it is important to understand who you are and what you want. An easy way to do this is to keep a journal and look for patterns in your writing. You may also want to consider specific questions such as the following:

- What do you want to be doing five, ten or fifteen years from now?
- With what sorts of people do you want to be surrounded?

Described below are some interesting ways to discuss your interests with career professionals and find out about some possible future careers.

Talk to professionals in the industry, or set up an informational interview

Ask a professional in your field of interest to spend an hour with you. Like most of us, professionals love to be interviewed, listened to, and be of

The old adage goes: If you choose a career involving something you love, then you will be happy, healthy and wise. (And you stand a pretty good chance of making money too.)

help or inspiration to someone like yourself. Don't be afraid to ask your parents or call up a friend of the family. Some schools, both high schools and colleges, have lists of alumni who are available for informational interviews. An informational interview is just that, an interview you set up with a professional (the alum) for the purposes of eliciting information about his or her career.

Go to work with someone (Job Shadowing)

Some organizations offer the option of allowing you to spend a day or a half of a day with a professional. This experience allows you to see what actually occurs at work.

Internships

Internships are an excellent way of exploring possible careers. Internships are usually non-paid, short-term positions at a company or institution. You receive work experience, career-contacts and

recommendations in exchange for your labor and enthusiasm.

Volunteer

Sometimes people are not sure of exactly what they want to do, but feel that they might like working to serve the needy, gain business experience, or for some other worthwhile activity. Volunteering is an excellent way to expose yourself to different kinds of work and test to see if your personality can survive the demands of non-profit or for-profit work.

Temporary work

Temping (temporary work through a "temp agency") can expose you fairly quickly to diverse work situations--and you get paid for exploring different careers! Even if you decide that a particular temp job is not really in line with your long-term goals, each job gives you work experience and knowledge about the job market.

Source: <http://library.thinkquest.org/13738/CAREERS/choose.html>

When considering your career options, you should always think about:

- What makes you happy?
- What are your goals?
- What are your dreams?